

AccessLetter

**Cambridge Commission for
Persons with Disabilities**

Gubernatorial Forum Focuses on Disability Issues

With the 2010 gubernatorial elections just around the corner, voters must now begin to sift through biased campaign ads, public opinion, and vague political rhetoric to discover which candidate has their best interests at heart.

For Massachusetts voters with disabilities at least, this task has become somewhat easier: on May 4, 2010, Perkins School for the Blind hosted the first-ever gubernatorial forum on disability issues. All four balloted candidates (and Democrat Grace Ross, who apparently did not secure enough signatures to get her name on the ballot) participated at the forum.

Each appeared ready to give both political and personal accounts of their relationship with the disability community, and to share their policy goals regarding health and human services.

This forum, first proposed by the Bay State Council for the Blind and organized by the Disability Policy Consortium (DPC), represents an important step towards greater accessibility.

In Massachusetts, people with disabilities finally have the full attention (and feedback) of state policymakers, and with that attention comes the potential to make real, lasting improvements.

(More on Forum, page 2)

Disability Q&A

This issue of AccessLetter begins a new column answering questions on a variety of disability-related topics.

Q. I am getting ready to convert some warehouse space into a small retail business here in Cambridge -- what are my accessibility requirements?

A. As a retail business, you need to comply with both state and federal accessibility requirements. The

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) is a federal law which includes standards for accessible design, to ensure that businesses are accessible to individuals with disabilities.

The Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB) is a state agency that has its own accessibility regulations. While MAAB and ADA accessibility

standards are similar in many respects, there are some differences.

In general, as a retail business, you need to comply with both MAAB and ADA accessibility requirements. In cases where the two standards differ, you need to follow whichever would result in a greater level of accessibility for your customers with disabilities.

First, the ADA requires all places of public accommodation, including retail businesses, to remove barriers to access whenever it is readily achievable to do so.

(More on Disability Q&A, page 3)



**Standing room only audience at the
gubernatorial forum.**

Forum (cont. from page 1)

Our goal now, say disability advocates, must be to hold these candidates to their promises.

Bob Oakes, editor of local news radio station (and NPR affiliate) WBUR, acted as the moderator during the disability forum, asking each candidate to respond to pre-written questions from both himself and the audience.

Oakes, a self-proclaimed “polio baby from the 50’s,” did not shy away from difficult subjects.

During their twenty-five minute question and answer periods, each candidate was asked - among other things - about the imminent cutback of statewide dental services, the personal care attendant program, and special education, as well as ongoing concerns about accessibility and transportation.

Tim Cahill, the independent candidate for governor, was the first to give his opening statement at the forum. Cahill, who is the current State Treasurer of Massachusetts, focused on the importance of boosting the economy to ensure the future stability of “safety net” (basic) services. “I believe we have to first work on fixing the economy,” Cahill explained, “so that we can bring in the revenue that we need for state government but also to create opportunities for people.”

Cahill was reluctant to make any promises, however; when asked if “programs for the disabled won’t be harmed in the first budget process that you go through as Governor,” Cahill was adamant that “if our economy doesn’t grow, then there can be no guarantees.”

Cahill stated a desire “to level the playing field” between people with and without disabilities. He expressed the hope that “there won’t be an ‘us’ vs. ‘them’ as we go forward.”

Governor Deval Patrick also participated in the forum as the incumbent Democratic candidate. Patrick elaborated on his administration’s efforts to maintain safety net services despite significant cutbacks. “We all know, this is the worst economy in living memory,” Patrick said.



Gov. Patrick addresses the gubernatorial forum while DPC's Robyn Powell looks on.

(Photos by DPC)

From the Governor’s point of view, these last four years have been a constant struggle to balance the needs of the Commonwealth and the extremely limited budget.

When Bob Oakes asked the audience to “raise your voice or raise your hand if you think this

Governor can do better,” Patrick was among the first with his hand in the air. Still, the Governor maintained

that “the total cuts to Health and Human Services were less than one percent” during these past few years, despite other major cuts in the state budget.

While Patrick affirmed his commitment to fighting cutbacks in health and human services, there is still much general dissatisfaction with the economy – and the way state government is handling the recession.

After Democrat Grace Ross responded to Oakes’ questions (for those interested, her comments and those of the other candidates may be read at the DPC website: www.dpcma.org), Jill Stein, the Green Rainbow Party candidate, gave her opening statement.

(More on Forum, page 3)

Disability Q&A (cont'd from page 1)

“Readily achievable” means easily accomplishable, and able to be done without much difficulty or expense. This is an ongoing obligation, and is required even if you are not performing any renovations.

In addition, if you are altering or renovating an existing building, the ADA also requires you to make the altered areas readily accessible to and usable by people with disabilities. The ADA also requires you provide an accessible route from the building entrance to the altered areas, so long as doing so does not result in disproportionate costs.

“Disproportionate costs” are defined as those costs exceeding 20% of the overall cost of the alterations. For example, if you are spending \$50,000 on alterations, under the ADA you may have to spend up to an additional \$10,000 providing an accessible route.

Turning to state law, MAAB regulations also require you to make altered areas accessible as part of your renovations. Furthermore, if you are spending over \$100,000 on renovations, MAAB requires you to provide an accessible entrance into your building (unless an accessible entrance already exists). If the overall cost of your renovations exceeds 30% of the assessed value of the building, MAAB requires you to make the entire building accessible.

For more information on this topic, contact the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (see contact info on the back cover of this newsletter).

For more specific information on the ADA, contact the New England ADA Center at 800-949-4232.

For more specific information on MAAB’s accessibility requirements, contact 617-727-0660.

Forum (cont. from page 2)

Stein immediately refuted Patrick’s implication that there have been few serious cutbacks to human services during his four years in office; “One of the first cuts that we saw when the Governor took office was...to Ferguson Industries for the Blind which... served so many people with really critical jobs, but somehow it was first on the firing line,” Stein claimed.

When asked to articulate her views on special education and the Community First initiative (which would expand family and community-based options for institutional care), Stein described how her background as a medical professional shaped her

understanding of the needs of people with disabilities, as well as her credibility in discussing those issues. “The measure of a society,” Stein said, “is really in how it treats its most vulnerable citizens.”

Charlie Baker, the Republican gubernatorial candidate and onetime Secretary of Health and Human Services, was the last of the five participants to speak. Bill Allan noted that Charlie Baker – who originally declined an invitation to the forum – was a pleasant surprise. “He seemed very knowledgeable and showed a lot of enthusiasm,” Allan recalled.

Not surprisingly, Baker criticized the Patrick administration’s handling of state funds, especially



Steve Rothstein (left), President of Perkins School, chats with candidate Charlie Baker

those funds allotted to Health and Human Services. "I think we should be far more aggressive about coming up with a simpler way to organize and structure Health and Human Services," Baker stated. He went on to say that by simplifying the bureaucracy of the HHS executive office, more could be achieved with fewer "administrative activities." Oakes raised some concerns about the overall effects of consolidating an office as comprehensive as HHS, but Baker reiterated his belief that administrative functions should be cut back so that more money could be spent on programming.

When asked if he thought the forum was successful, DPC's Bill Allan did not hesitate in responding with a wholehearted "yes." "The audience was standing-room-only! We were really pleased with both the turnout and the level of engagement on both sides of the table. This forum should definitely have a place in future campaigns."

-- Emily Kane

But, It *Is* Impaired, and I *Did* Lose It!

Please don't call me "hard-of-hearing." While I absolutely respect and appreciate why "hard-of-hearing" (HoH) is the term that many activists use to describe themselves, rather than "hearing impaired" or as having a "hearing loss," I personally can't stand it.

For one thing, the grammar of it is archaic and makes no sense in modern-day language. And, for another, the often-associated connotation that "HoH" refers to a mild degree of hearing difficulty is an inaccurate, and even somewhat invalidating, description of my (in)ability to hear. For me, hearing is more than hard, it is downright *impossible* at times.

It should be noted that I am not part of the Deaf culture, members of which consider themselves a linguistic minority with American Sign Language as their primary language. In the biological sense of the word, though, I am deaf. You see, I *lost* my hearing as a teenager and have since received bilateral cochlear implants, surgically implanted devices that bypass the damaged parts of my inner ears to directly stimulate my auditory nerves, which carry electrical signals to the brain, where they are interpreted as sound. I have no residual hearing at all, and so hear nothing (other than the incessant ringing in my ears) upon turning my implants off. However, cochlear implantation does not restore normal hearing, so my ability to hear remains impaired even when my "ears" are on.

Some people frame this as an issue of political correctness, but I think it's more properly framed as an issue where members of an oppressed or disenfranchised group have the power to choose how they wish to be described, rather than being assigned to certain societal "labels." Such labels can be distinctly offensive, archaic and/or antiquated. Personally, I find "hard of hearing" to be both archaic and offensive.

While it can be hard sometimes to know what terminology to use when referring to a person's disability, of utmost importance is using person-first language, in which the *person* is emphasized over the disability. For example, referring to a group as "hearing impaired people" defines individuals by their disability, whereas "people who are hearing impaired" or "who have hearing impairments" sets the very important distinction that an individual's disability is only *part* of who they are.

My name is Kate, and I am hearing impaired when my cochlear implants are on and deaf when they are not.

-- Opinion by Kate Thurman

Upcoming Events of Interest to the Disability Community (See end of Calendar for all weekly/recurring events)

Now–Aug 30 **Adaptive Recreation: Learn to Sail with Modified Sailboats** – Learn to sail on the Charles River while enjoying the Boston scenery! Persons with disabilities and their guests will have the use of specialized, accessible sailboats and transfer equipment, staff assistance to get in and out of the boats, and sailing

instruction, all for just \$1.00! Sponsored by the Department of Recreation's Universal Access Program, this program is offered by Community Boating. Pre-registration is required, and sessions, which are typically one hour long, are offered on weekdays from 3PM-5PM and Weekends from 10AM-2PM. For more information, or to register, call Community Boating at 617-523-1038, x23, email <info@community-boating.org>, or see <www.community-boating.org/programs/universal-access>.

- Now–Aug 31 **Open Door Gallery: Exploring the Primates** –This exhibition by artists at the Center for Emerging Artists (CEA) explores the effect of primary colors on human emotion and why color is so important to us. The CEA is operated by EMARC, a non-profit organization that provides support to individuals with intellectual disabilities. The exhibit is being held through August 31 at the VSA Arts Open Door Gallery, 89 South Street, Suite 101, Boston. The Gallery is open Monday-Friday from 9AM to 5PM. For more information, call VSA at 617-350-7713 (voice) or 617-350-6535 (TTY), or see <www.theemarc.org> or <www.vsamass.org/gallery>.
- Aug.3 **Power Chairs on Ice** – Sponsored by the Department of Recreation's (DCR) Universal Access Program (UAP), this is an opportunity for power chair users to cool off from the summer heat while spinning, sliding and playing ball games on ice! This event is being held from 1:30PM to 3:20PM in Revere at the Cronin Rink, 850 Revere Beach Parkway. For more information, or to pre-register, call the UAP at 617-626-1294 (voice) or 413-577-2200 (TTY), or see <http://www.mass.gov/dcr/universal_access/a_events.htm>.
- Aug. 4 **FREE Assistive Technology Demonstration: Switches and Games** – Offered by the Easter Seals Assistive Technology and Training Center (ARTC) in Boston, this free event will showcase switches and games that are operated by grasp, motion detection, and switch interface. The demonstration, including an opportunity for participants to try the various devices, will be held from 10AM to 12PM and again from 2PM to 4PM at the ARTC, 89 South Street, Boston. Registration is required and can be done by phone at 617-226-2634 (voice) or 800-564-9700 (TTY), or by email at <artc@eastersealsma.org>.
- Aug. 12 **Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) Monthly Meeting**—meets on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 51 Inman Street, 2nd floor Conference Room, 5:30 to 7 p.m. with opportunity for public comment. Call 617-349-4692 or email <kthurman@cambridgema.gov> for more information or to request accommodations.
- Aug. 20 **Free Fun Fridays: Institute of Contemporary Art** – Sponsored by the Highland Street Foundation, admission to the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) in Boston is free on Friday, August 20 from 10AM to 9PM. Everyone is welcome; there are no eligibility guidelines or restrictions. The ICA, which is fully wheelchair accessible, is located at 100 Northern Avenue, near the Silver Line World Trade Center and Courthouse stations. For more information about the ICA, call 617-478-3100, email <info.icaboston.org>, or go to <www.icaboston.org>. For more information about Free Fun Fridays, including a list of other free events, call 508-820-1151, email <kbristol@highlandstreet.org>, or see <www.highlandstreet.org/special-programs/free-fun-Fridays.html>.
- Aug.20 **FREE Adaptive Horseback Riding** – DCR's Universal Access Program (UAP) is partnering with Windrush Farm Therapeutic Equestrian to offer FREE trail riding on horseback to riders with disabilities at Bradley Palmer State Park in Topsfield from 10AM – 2PM. Windrush horses, staff and volunteers will come equipped with a mounting ramp and adaptive equipment to lead four riders at a time for an hour long trail ride through the park. Pre-registration is required. For more information or to receive waivers, register and reserve a spot, call Gigi at the UAP, 617-626-1294. For more information on the Universal Access Program at Windrush Farm, see <www.windrushfarm.org/ua.html>.
- Aug.24 **Power Chairs on Ice** – Sponsored by the Department of Recreation's (DCR) Universal Access Program (UAP), this is an opportunity for power chair users cool off from the summer heat while spinning, sliding and playing ball games on ice! This event is being held from 1:30 to 3:20PM in Revere at the Cronin Rink, 850 Revere Beach Parkway. For more information, or to pre-register, call the UAP at 617-626-1294 (voice) or 413-577-2200 (TTY), or see <http://www.mass.gov/dcr/universal_access/a_events.htm>.
- Aug. 25 **FREE Assistive Technology Demonstration: Academic Tools** – Offered by the Easter Seals Assistive Technology and Training Center (ARTC) in Boston, this free event will showcase adaptive academic tools,

including Kurzweil 3000, digital recorders, reading aides and text-to-speech software. The demonstration, including an opportunity for participants to try the various devices, will be held from 10AM to 12PM and again from 2PM to 4PM at the ARTC, 89 South Street, Boston. Registration is required and can be done by phone at 617-226-2634 (voice) or 800-564-9700 (TTY), or by email at <artc@eastersealsma.org>.

- Aug.26 **Opportunity to apply for MBTA Senior and Transportation Access Passes** – MBTA System-Wide Accessibility staff will be on hand from 1PM to 4PM at the Cambridge Citywide Senior Center (806 Massachusetts Avenue, near Central Square station on the Red Line) to issue the MBTA discounted Senior and Transportation Access Pass (T.A.P.) CharlieCards. New Senior / TAP CharlieCard ID's will be processed for customers exchanging their old Senior / TAP ID's (issued before May 2005) and to first-time Senior customers (65+ with proof of age). Applications for the MBTA Transportation Access Pass (T.A.P.) CharlieCard, issued to persons with a qualifying disability, will also be available. New MBTA Senior / TAP CharlieCards may also be obtained at Senior/TAP CharlieCard offices located at Back Bay Station (Orange Line) and Downtown Crossing Station (Red/Orange line). Office hours are Monday through Friday from 8:30am to 5:00pm. For more information, including eligibility criteria and required documentation, call 617-222-3200 (voice) or 617-222-5146 (TTY), or see < http://www.mbta.com/riding_the_t/accessible_services/>.
- Aug. 27 **Free Fun Fridays: Museum of Science** – Sponsored by the Highland Street Foundation, admission to the Museum of Science (MoS) in Boston is free on Friday, August 27 from 9AM to 9PM. Everyone is welcome; there are no eligibility guidelines or restrictions. The MoS is located off the Green Line Science Park station at One Science Park in Boston. For more information about the MoS, call 617-723-2500 (voice) or 617-589-0417 (TTY), email <information@mos.org>, or go to <www.mos.org>. For more information about Free Fun Fridays, including a list of other free events, call 508-820-1151, email <kbristol@highlandstreet.org> or see <www.highlandstreet.org/special-programs/free-fun-Fridays.html>.
- Sept.3 **Free Fun Fridays: Grand Finale Weekend, Day One** – The Highland Street Foundation's Free Fun Fridays program is ending in style! Receive FREE admission to 16 museums and attractions in Massachusetts over two days. Free admission on Friday, September 3 is being offered at the New England Historic Genealogical Society, Sports Museum, EcoTarium, Cape Cod Museum of Art, New Bedford Whaling Museum, Concord Museum, Stone Zoo, and the Buttonwood Park Zoo. Everyone is welcome; there are no eligibility guidelines or restrictions. For more information about Free Fun Fridays, including a list of other free events, call 508-820-1151, email <kbristol@highlandstreet.org> or see <www.highlandstreet.org/special-programs/free-fun-Fridays.html>.
- Sept.4 **Free Fun Fridays: Grand Finale Weekend, Day Two** – See September 3 listing for details. FREE admission on Saturday, September 4 is being offered at the Edward Gorey House, Worcester Art Museum, U.S.S. Constitution Museum, Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame, American Textile History Museum, Discovery Museums, Cape Cod Children's Museum, and the Berkshire Museum.
- Sept. 11 **My Left Foot, another FREE movie presented by Disability Reframed: a Community Film Series** – Come see this unforgettable 1989 adaptation of Irish poet and painter Christy Brown's 1954 autobiography about growing up with cerebral palsy in working-class Ireland. Brown learned to write and paint using the only body part he could control: his left foot. Daniel Day-Lewis won an Academy Award for his emotionally and physically demanding role playing Brown. The screening, followed by comments and an open-forum discussion, will be held from 2PM to 5PM at the Citywide Senior Center, 806 Massachusetts Ave. in Central Square, Cambridge. This is a free public event; bring your friends! The site is wheelchair accessible. No need to RSVP. For questions or to request accommodations, contact the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities at 617-349-4692 (Voice), 617-492-0235 (TTY) or email <kthurman@cambridgema.gov>.
- Sept. 11 **Visually Impaired and Blind User Group (VIBUG)** – Members of VIBUG, which is a group serving blind and visually impaired computer users, are meeting from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at MIT, 77 Mass Ave, Building 5, Room 134 in Cambridge. Annual membership dues are \$20. For more information, call 617-383-9560, email <president@vibug.org>, or see <www.vibug.org>.
- Sept.13 **Accessible Hiking Trip on Georges Island in Boston** – Sponsored by DCR's Universal Access Program, Stavros Outdoor Access will lead this hike to explore accessible trails and rugged paths. Assistive

equipment and team-work will unite people of all abilities using Terra Trek mountain wheelchairs, push joggers and a lot of stops for resting. Bring a lunch and enjoy activities such as scavenger hunts, nature talks, and letterboxing. Sighted guides are available, as well as limited transportation. Pre-registration is required, and the cost is \$2 per person, \$4 per family, and \$10 for groups. For more information or to register, call Stavros at 413-259-0009. Information may also be found online at <http://www.mass.gov/dcr/universal_access/a_events.htm>.

Weekly & Recurring Events

Ongoing by Appointment

Injured Worker Support Meetings – Meetings are scheduled by appointment, often the 1st Wednesday of the month, 5:15 - 6:45 pm. Meetings/appointments usually take place at 650 Beacon Street, Kenmore Square, Boston, 4th Floor Conference Room. Volunteers provide resources and support. For more information or to set up a meeting, call 617-247-6827, or go to <www.rsiaction.org>.

Mondays

NAMI Connection – a support group for adults with mental illness sponsored by the National Alliance on Mental Illness, meets every Monday, 1-2:30 p.m. at the Cambridge Somerville Recovery Learning Community, 153 South St, 2nd Floor in Somerville. The group is free and open to all who self-identify as having a mental illness, regardless of diagnosis. For more information, contact Janel Tan at 617-863-5388 or <tanj@vinfen.org>.

Tuesdays

Boston Voice Users – this group for people who use speech recognition or dictation software meets from 7:30 – 9:30 p.m. on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at MIT in Building 2, Rm.135. To find out more about meetings and discussions go to <www.bostonvoiceusers.org>.

Wednesdays

Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA meets 1 – 3 p.m. at the State Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, 2nd floor Conference Room #2 on the 4th Wednesday of each month. Call 617-973-7507 voice or 617-973-7089 TTY or email <aact@ctps.org> for more information or to request interpreters. Security measures require proper ID for access to meetings.

DBSA-Boston (Depression Bipolar Support Alliance of Boston) Support Group meets every Wednesday evening, 7 - 9 p.m. at McLean Hospital in Belmont (de Marneffe Building, 1st floor lobby). Includes a lecture on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays. Call 617-855-2795 or see <www.dbsaboston.org> for more information.

Feeling for Form Introductory Tour of MFA for blind & low vision visitors – The Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) in Boston offers a series of introductory one-on-one guided tours to the Museum and its collections for blind and low vision individuals who want to build a deeper relationship with the Museum. Each monthly session focuses on a different collection and includes wayfinding and verbal description of spaces. These tours are given on the 1st Sunday of the month at 10:30 am and the 3rd Wednesday at 6:30 pm. Individuals can attend one or more sessions, whichever interests them. Guided tours can also be scheduled at other times. Pre-registration is not required unless a visitor needs a sighted guide or other access accommodation. Contact Valerie Burrows at 617-369-3302 or <vburrows@mfa.org> to register. Call 617-369-3189 or email <access@mfa.org> or go to <www.mfa.org> for more information. The MFA is located at 465 Huntington Avenue in Boston, 02115 and is accessible by the Green line “E” train to the “Museum of Fine Arts” stop, or the Orange line train to the “Ruggles” stop.

Free introductory tour of MFA in sign language & with assistive listening devices – A new monthly offering at the Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) in Boston for people who are Deaf or hard of hearing. These tours will be given at 6:30 pm on the 2nd Wednesday of each month. No pre-registration is required; meet at the Sharf Visitor Center in the MFA. For more information about accessible programs Valerie Burrows at 617-369-3302 voice,

617-267-9703 TTY or email <access@mfa.org>.

Open Support Group for Adults on the Autism Spectrum – Meets on the 2nd Wednesday of each month, 7-8:30 pm at the offices of the Autism Association of New England (AANE), 85 Main St., Suite 101, Watertown, MA. Hosted by Jamie Freed; a \$5 donation is suggested. RSVP to 617-393-3824, x310 or <Jamie.Freed@aane.org>.

Rainbow Support Group for Adults with Developmental Disabilities – Funded by Massachusetts Advocates Standing Strong and the Department of Developmental Services, and hosted by Cambridge Family & Children's Service (CFCS), this group provides an opportunity for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and intersex individuals with developmental challenges to find their voice, be heard and supported in a safe, friendly environment. Participants must be at least 22 years old. Meets on the 3rd Wednesday of each month, 6:00-8:00 pm at CFCS, 60 Gore Street, Cambridge, which is accessible by taking the MBTA Green Line to the Lechmere station. For more information, contact Peter Montalto at <pmontalto@helpfamilies.org> or 617-876-4210, x122.

Senior Support Group for caregivers over 60 – meets on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at the Family Resource Center, 20 Gould Street in Reading. Share and learn with other seniors who have adult family members with developmental disabilities. For meeting times or more information, contact Judy SantaMaria at 781-942-4888, x4022 or <familysupport@theemarc.org>.

Thursdays

Autism Support Group – meets 3rd Thursday of each month, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. at the Central Square Branch of Cambridge Public Library, 45 Pearl Street in Cambridge. For more information contact Lorraine Iacopucci at <liacopucci@nsarc.org> or 978-624-2304.

Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) Monthly Meeting – meets on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 51 Inman Street, 2nd floor Conference Room, 5:30 to 7 p.m. with opportunity for public comment. Call 617-349-4692 or email <kthurman@cambridgema.gov> for more information or to request accommodations.

DBSA-Boston (Depression Bipolar Support Alliance of Boston) Support Group – meets at Mass. General Hospital every Thursday, 7 - 9 p.m. in the Schiff Conference Center Room, Suite 4A on the 4th floor in the Yawkey Building. Follow the signs. Meetings are free and open to public. For more information call 617-855-2795 or email <mghgroup@dbsaboston.org>.

“Piecing the Puzzle,” a Parent to Parent Autism Support Group – meets in Jefferson Park Community Room #1, at Jackson Place in Cambridge every Thursday from 10 am to 12 noon. The purpose of this group is to provide support and understanding to families with children on the autism spectrum and to increase autism awareness in the community. Sponsored by Cambridge Family & Children's Services in collaboration with the Dept. of Developmental Services (DDS). For more information or to become a member, contact Yevett Fraticelli at <piecing_the_puzzle@yahoogroups.com> or 617-876-4210, x105.

Saturdays

Free Food Distribution at the Zola Center – The Irving K. Zola Center for Persons with Disabilities is offering a Free Food Distribution Program in collaboration with the Brookline Food Co-op every other Saturday, beginning August 7 (8/7, 8/21, 9/4 and 9/18) from noon to 3PM, with food donated from local supermarkets, bakeries and restaurants. The program is open to all Massachusetts residents, and there are no income or disability eligibility requirements, and will be held at the Zola Center, 20 Hartford Street, Newton Highlands (take the MBTA Green Line D train to the Newton Highlands stop). **Registration is required** and can be done by phone at 617-277-5131 or by email at zolacenter@juno.com. See < www.zolacenter.org> for more information.

Sundays

Feeling for Form Introductory Tour of MFA for blind & low vision visitors –These tours are given on the 1st Sunday of the month at 10:30 am. Pre-registration is not required for the Sunday tours unless a visitor needs a sighted guide or other access accommodation. See Wednesday listing for details.

Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities

The Commission was established in 1979 to act as a clearinghouse on disability and access issues throughout the City of Cambridge. We strive to raise awareness of disability matters, to eliminate discrimination, and to promote equal opportunity for people with all types of disabilities – physical, mental and sensory. The Commission provides information, referral, guidance, and technical assistance to individuals and their families, employers, public agencies, businesses and private non-profit organizations.

The goal of our 11-member citizen advisory board, comprised primarily of individuals with disabilities, is to maximize access to all aspects of Cambridge community life. Our regularly scheduled Commission meetings, which always include an opportunity for public comment, are held at 5:30 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month.

Access Notice: The City of Cambridge and Commission for Persons with Disabilities do not discriminate on the basis of disability. This newsletter is available in e-mail, large print and other alternative formats upon request. To add your name to our mailing list, to inquire about alternative formats, or for information about other auxiliary aids and services or reasonable modifications in policies and procedures, contact CCPD.

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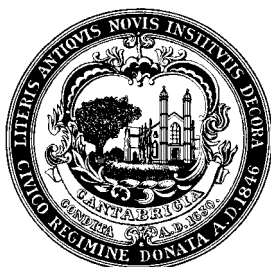
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We welcome your articles, comments, criticisms, and suggestions. Write us!

Read past issues on our website: www.cambridgema.gov/DHSP2/disabilities.cfm

If you would rather receive your copy of **AccessLetter** electronically, please provide us with your name and e-mail address. To request that your name be removed from our mailing list, contact us at 617-349-4692 Voice, 617-492-0235 TTY, 617-349-4766 Fax, or kthurman@cambridgema.gov

Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities

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